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ABSTRACT

The advantages that the suggestopedic method of teaching holds for instructional quality are outlined in the context of its use in second language instruction. Important aspects of suggestopedia include: (1) its provision of a dynamic, lively, enthusiastic classroom atmosphere that promotes motivated participation; (2) a holistic approach to the individual's personality that attempts to explore and harness the student's full intellectual potential; (3) the eclectic combination of methods into an initiative-cognitive synthesis; (4) the use of interesting texts that combine language and cultural studies; and (5) the use of an avant-garde, psycholinguistic approach. It is suggested that in order to use the method effectively, the teacher requires additional training and must adopt a new attitude toward mistakes and reduce considerably the time spent on repetitive drills and grammar exercises. (MSE)

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SUGGESTOPEADIA AND TEACHER TRAINING

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During the past ten years, suggestopeadia and its Western variances became one of the most fashionable topics for presentations, papers or discussions in different professional associations or international conferences on language teaching.

Most of the speakers take usually one particular aspect of the theory and criticize it, or disagree so strongly that the listeners feel puzzled and confused.

Some other presenters give demonstrations of their own adaptation of suggestopeadia - (or LOZANOV method)[1] - demonstrations which, out of the classroom - look artificial, non-professional and - very often - totally commercial.

I am using the term suggestopeadia in its original, Bulgarian version given by Professor Novakov from the Institute of Suggestology. He prepared the suggestopeadic manuals and led all the psycho-linguistic research related to developping human potential through foreign language teaching from 1965 to 1977.

Here I wish to underline that, unlike some journalists, accouters and other "amateurs", I will speak about suggestopeadia as a language teaching specialist, brought up in Bulgaria, trained in the Institute of Suggestology and author.[1]

If I have chosen the topic concerning teacher's training, it is because I consider it as a conditio sine qua non especially when we are looking for accelerative teaching techniques, effective learning process, and good performance of the students.

1. "La Suggesgologie", ed. Retg, Paris 1978 (translated in Spanish "La Sugestologia", Mensaiero, Bilbao 1980).

In this paper, I will analyse the most important aspects of suggestopeadia with references to the language class as they follow:

1. A dynamic, lively, enthousiastic atmosphere.

Anyone entering for a first time a class based on the suggestopeadic method cannot suppress an initial feeling of surprise, which quickly gives way to fascination. The students, siting in a semicycle, participate to an unusual extent; an expression of lively interest and keen satisfaction plays over their faces. Motivation is simply not a problem here. Rather than sitting passively in their armchairs, they execute movements and gestures that are connected weith concrete language and communicational activities; they mime meetings in the street, improvise airplane trips or excursions by car and discuss the traffic, wax eloquent on the danger of smoking, or admire the scenery while at the wheel. Sometimes they get together at someone's house to celebrate a birthday party, sometimes they visit a manager to apply for a job, and sometimes they scold an imaginary dog. Usually, the class is transformed into a real life experience based on the application of various techniques of spontaneous expression to everyday situations. In this way, suggestopeadia is an application of the psycholinguistic principle of the relationship between language and behaviour, developped by Osgood.[3]. The association of speech with gestures for the purpose of performing a psychologically motivated activity encourages the student to become personally involved, to subjectify his desires, to express them freely in the target language, and to act in accordance with the inmost needs of his ego. Of course, the degree of spontaneity varies from one individual to the next and, just as it happens in real life, some people speak up less than others. Still they all speak naturally, with a smile of amusement, with a personal touch and gesture, with pleasure.

This atmosphere of dynamic, motivated participation is what strikes the observer from the moment he first comes into contact with a class following the suggestopeadic method; unconsciously, he wants to join the group,

3. Reference to Osgood in Hörmann, "Initiation à la psycho-linguistique, Paris, Larousse, 1972, pp. 128 and 160.

to belong to it, whether as a teacher or as a student. In any case, his desire soon becomes compelling; he wants to join in the fun and play the game. The first effect is mainly emotional[4] in spite of the unquestionable scientific control of these students' emotions. But there is much more than emotions in the latter, what leads me to develop the second aspect of the method:

2. A new psychological approach to language teaching:

Suggestopeadia is bound up with a certain concept of personality, of communication, of learning and of education. It focusses a special light on psychological factors that come into play in the learning process, such as sensory perception, social relations, neuro-cerebral functions, physiological laws, memory, motivation, human magnetism, material organisation of the classroom and the environment.

Beginning with a holistic concept of the human personality, suggestopeadia tries to explore and harness the student's full intellectual potential, through the interplay of emotions and intellect, the unconscious and the conscious, the body and the mind.

Learning is a complete process, says Dr. Lozanov, that needs the participation of the student as a whole, according to the new discoveries of psychology, parapsychology, computer sciences, theories of communication etc. adapted to the suggestology.

In terms of genetic psychology, suggestopeadia may be regarded as a form of pedagogy based on a constructivist point of view; the pedagogical process develops in a more concentric than linear way and has more in common with the spontaneous, natural, children way of learning.

In terms of Gestalt psychology, suggestopeadia emphasized relations rather than isolated elements, studying syntactical aggregates and lexical units. In this respect, Lozanov believes that a multiplicity of simultaneous perceptions is desirable: the stimuli reciprocically reinforce each other to give more weight

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4. Some researchers even prefer to replace the term "suggestopeadia" by "emotopeadia" like Dr. Luiz Machado de Andrado, from Brazil, University of Rio de Janiero.

to the general information, thereby facilitating its transmission and assimilation. Any pedagogical situation involves conditionning, but suggestopeadia has nothing in common with the simplistic theories of the behaviourists; it resembles Luria's synthesis.[6]. Exposed to a complex of verbal and non-verbal stimuli whose combined effect is to trigger emotional reactions which act on imagination. Luria and other new Freudian psychologists conducted lengthy studies to establish the relationship between imagination and memory, thought and language. Lozanov's suggestopeadia uses the effect of positive verbal or non-verbal suggestion to open up the student's functinal (intellectual and emotional) reserve potentials [7].

Because teaching is an art, the teacher must make his students feel that he has confidence in them and in their capacity to obtain good academic performance. Such a positive attitude reinforce the other suggestive elements through "the natual process of conditioning and ritual".[8]. The idea of ritual includes the so-called "prestige" suggestions, which are used to some extent when the linguistic material is presented. These suggestions were adapted by Lozanov from the complex hatha-yoga ritual. With this kind of instruction invovled, the pedagogical, psychological and psychotherapeutic responsability of the teacher is considerable; besides a knowledge of the language and an artistic personality, he must work hard to be able to lead the class with a high professionalisme and a constant enthousiasme.

3. An initiative, cognitive, synthetic method:

Language teaching methodology has become a serious matter of debate during the last ten years. The period of general infatuation with imitative and behaviourist methods in the sixties was followed by an orientation towards the so-called cognitive methods which often use grammatical explanation and translation to perform comprehension and comparison between the target language and the mother tongue. Jacobovitch[9]., for one, recommends an eclectic method combining the best elements of the already existing methods. These ideas,

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7. Kitaygorodskaïa, trained by Novakov in 1971, applied suggestopeadia in Moscow and called the method "method for activisation the student's reserve potentials.[6]

adopted by contemporary linguists only recently, have long been familiar to the language specialists in the Institute of Suggestology, since their method dates from 1965. For all of us, practioners , it is clear that suggestopeadia is an initiative-cognitive synthesis.

At the beginning, the student imitates the intonation, gestures and the linguistic behaviour of the teacher. However, the repetitive exercises that are so much a part of audio visual and structural methods, are considerably reduced and replaced by communicational activities and mini-dialogues. In addition, suggestopeadia uses translation and grammatical explanations in an attempt to take advantage of the traditional and cognitive approaches. All the dialogues in the suggestopeadic manual are reproduced in both the target language and Bulgarian, since the fastest, most direct way of explaining certain complex linguistic phenomena is by using the mother tongue, says Novakov.[10].

More concretely, courses based on the suggestopeadic method are introduced in two stages: presentation and development. The presentation (linguistic introduction, active seance and passive seance) is made by the teacher.

a) During the first stage, the linguistic content is introduced orally. The teacher tells the story of the dialogue, explains some new words and expressions, ask questions or invites the students to play a short game given in the text; if difficult some passages are read by the whole group, some new songs are sung by three students, some situations are played only by gestures etc.

b) During the active seance (or session), the teacher reads the dialogue with a special intonation following the pattern of trinity: the first sentence is read in an ordinary, declarative voice; the second is wispered somehow mysteriously; the third sentence is said in a loud, imperative voice and so on. The students follow the text and listen to the teacher with an active attention; that is why the session is called "active". During the passive (concert) session the students are given the instuction to relax, to lean their back on the chairs, to close their eyes and listen to the music which is mainly baroque or classical music. This music has been selected after several experiments

in order to banish "fatigue" and to facilitate memor ization. Of course, the degree of memorization depends to a large extent on the musical sensitivity of each student, and candidates at the Institute of Suggestology are tested using an encephalogram before being accepted into the language course.

Here I must mention that the private schools in the West can hardly apply suggestopeadia in its scientifical aspects; in order to survive financially, they accept any student, they often accept teachers without a specific academic qualifications so that, in my opinion, they never can get high, convincing results. Teachers for suggestopeadia must have a good experience with all the other conventional and audio-visual methods, before getting a specific training for suggestopeadia.

4. Interesting texts which combine language and cultural studies.

The famous Russian psychologist Vigotsky, after having studied, for many years, the relation between language and thought, gives priority to emotions and theorizes that all our ideas contain a rational expression of our emotional attitudes. Researchers at the Institute of Suggestology applied this psycholinguistic principle when they prepared manuals for levels I and II. On the other hand, suggestology was based on the necessity to develop human potential, especially memory through imagination and peripheric stimuli.[10]. The main purpose of the language calss was to develop such a potential, to arouse "hy_permnesia". Interesting, enriching text books had to be prepared with all the informative and affective aspects of the target language. Each manual contains ten thematic and situational dialogues. Within each theme there are other mini-situations and sub-themes related to the main theme. In such a way the dialogue is not any more an ordinary language lesson, but a scenario based on an original subject and containing moments of drama, conflict with unexpected issues and invariably happy endings. The situations, interesting, involving and pleasant, act on the imagination as well as on the general emotional tone of the student. Because of their design, the dialogues are instrumental in making the students participate themselves in the plot outlined; they act their parts and reproduce or improvise the suggested situations while adding a personal, emotional touch.

At the first level, the language content covers the usual subject matter of foreign language courses: "who am I?", "my house", "my family", "my school", "my city", "my country" and so forth. The student learns to express familiar realities pertaining to his personal and profesional life in the foreign language. In this way, the learning process is a part of the student's inner subjectivity, it becomes "meaningful" (to use Rogers' term), and encourages the learner to communicate his ideas and feelings.

At the second level, the dialogues are centered around a trip to the country where the language is spoken: France, England, Germany etc. The student discovers the various aspects of the new country: the inhabitants, historical places and events, picturesque districts and citiesfamous artists and scholars, cultural life and so forth. Since language and culture are inseparable, the well led suggesteopeadic class provides the students with a real inderstanding of the culture for which the language is a vehicule.

The basic linguistic element for these manuals is the sentence. Sentences here are patterns for every day conversation and could be used in other circumstances.[12]. In such a way the students have the impression that the lessons contain all the vocabulary they will need in order to speak.

It should also be noted that the choice of concrete, real, realistic situatins for the dialogues elicits the student's emotional participation. Memorization is once more stimulated; words and sentences learned in highly charged emotional circumstances will remain associated with the emotional tone of the situation and elicit similar tones when they are used in other contexts.

In suggestopeadia, the word "communication"is understood in an extremely broad sense, and includes not only informative but also expressive, phatic, cognitive and even poetic communication, to borrow some of Jacobson's terminology.

5. An avant-garde, psycholinguistic method for which teachers require more genuine training.

Centered toward communication and considering the main recent discoveries in modern psychology, psychotherapie and psycholinguistics suggestopeadia is, in point of fact, an avant-garde method. It leads the teacher to

renew himself, to prepare for serious research and to maintain an enthousiastic atmosphere in the classroom. The pedagogical renewal means that:

a) he (or she) must adopt a new attitude toward mistakes;

b) he (or she) should reduce considerably the time spent on repetitive grills or grammar exercises.

a) The repressive, guilt-inducing attitude expressed by many teachers when the students make mistakes is one of the most negative suggestions. If an average student is systematically corrected, he will lose the little confidence he has and ultimately stop talking in class. Dr. Lozanov recommends that the teacher keep corrections to a minimum during the first week of the course, until the students are confident enough to speak up. Then they may be corrected more often, but only in a non-repressive informational manner.[13]. As far as phonetic correction is concerned, our colleagues at the Institute of Suggestology recommend that it must be systematically avoided, as long as the message is intelligible.

b) The second point of teacher's renewal is the view of repetition as a link in the learning process. According to Lozanov suggestology repetition is an association with negative suggestions: it reduces student's motivation when he performs, and suggests indirectly that learning is a difficult business. Inevitably it results for the student in a lack of confidence in his intellectual potential. If we want to sustain the learner's enthousiasm and interest, that repetition stirs up a feeling of irritation, the information provided becomes decreasingly important and motivation becomes nonexistant.

In a conclusion, suggestopeadic experience gives all the teachers an effectiveness in using successfully theire knowledge, their culture, their imagination and creativity.

After twenty years of language teaching with different methods and techniques, I consider my suggestopeadic experience like the most enriching and valuable.. It is understandable if I am unable now to go back and teach with an ordinary, conventional approach. Thank you for your attention.

Dr Bogdana Bélanger
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BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

1. The name LOZANOV method is not adequate, because Dr. LOZANOV gave us the theory, suggestoloyg, and the instructions for its application, but the language teaching method, suggestopeadia, was elaborated by professor NOVAKOV, methodologist for modern language teaching and well known linguist.

2. BÉLANGER, Bagriana, "La suggestologie", ed. RETZ, 255 p. Paris, 1978, available in Spanish ("La sugestologia", MENSAJERO, Bilbao, 1980).

3. Reference to Osgood in Hörmann, "Initiation à la pshcholinguistique", ed. Larousse, Paris, 1972, pp. 128 and 160.

4. Professor Luiz Machado de Andrado, fropm the University of Rio de Janeiro, considers that the term "suggesteopeadia" should be replaced by "emotopeadia.

   Professor J. Shechter from the University of Moscow, after several years of suggestopeadic experiments and development, adopted the name of "emotional - significant method". (See KITAIGORODSKAYA, "METODI INTENSIVNOGO OBUTCHENIA INOSTRANNIM IAZIKAM", ed. Moscow, Vishaya Schola, 1982, pp. 13 and 14.

6. LURIA ALEXANDER, "Une prodigieuse mémoire", ed. Delachaux-Niestlé, 1972.

7. BÉLANGER, Bagriana, "La suggestologie", IV ch.

8. LOZANOV GUEORGUI, "Nature, history and experimental development of suggestopeadia for foreign language teaching" in Suggestology and Suggestopeadia, vol. 1, 1975, Sofia, Institute of Suggesteology, p. 7.

9. JACOBOVITCH, Leon, "The psycholinguistic ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES"

10. NOVAKOV ALEKO, interview and training sessions.

11. VIGOTSKY, "Thought and language"

12. NOVAKOV ALEKO, "CHARACTERISICS OF THE SUGGESTOPEADIC LANGUAGE MANUAL" in "PROBLEMS OF SUGGESTOLOGY", SOFIA, 1975, NAOUKA I ISKOUSTVO.

13. See COSTE DANIEL "La méthodologie de l'enseignement des langues maternelles et secondes: état de la question" in "Les actes du IV colloque de l'ACLA", 1974, pp. 15-17.